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Duxbury Clipper

Striking Storm Leaves Wake of Damage

By RAY HAINER

After a week that saw several lightning strikes in town, a fierce electrical storm descended on Duxbury Saturday night. Strangely, the damage caused by the storm was concentrated in a small area of town near the Marshfield border.

Stranger still, the storm's wrath seems to have been directed largely at one man.

After having dinner in Plymouth, John Gannon headed home with his wife to their house on Parting Rock Road. The couple had seen lightning from the restaurant in Plymouth, and as they neared their neighborhood the couple noticed that the power on Lincoln Street was out.

When they pulled onto

their street, it was littered with branches, leaves, and downed cables. "The street was in shambles," Gannon said. "The rain was going sideways, and there were 70 mph winds."

The Gannons could see lightning striking the neighborhood around them as they sat in their driveway, and they decided to wait until the lightning subsided to make their way into the house. When a break in the lightning finally came, Gannon made a dash for a nearby shed to find a flashlight.

It was there the storm trapped him. In a flash the lightning resumed, and began to hit the ground as close as ten feet from the shed.

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Camille Neville's car was damaged by a falling tree during Saturday night's storm, but her husband's car escaped unscathed.

Weekend Storm is Striking

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Gannon witnessed the storm from a vantage point that very few (living) people have shared. When a bolt would hit a tree, he said, a limb split immediately, and after a two or three second pause a loud explosion would occur.

Gannon was held captive in the shed for about 15 minutes, during which time he estimated there were 3 lightning strikes every 5 seconds. The bolts were about six inches across, he reported, and very hot. "I could feel the heat, and the light was blinding," he said.

"I thought I was going to be killed that night," Gannon said afterward. "I kept thinking, 'I hope death doesn't hurt.'"

Gannon lived to tell his tale, of course, and fortunately nobody else in the neighborhood was hurt. The destruction on Parting Rock Road was extensive, however, as one of Gannon's neighbors, Camille Neville, can testify.

Around 10:30 p.m. on Saturday, Neville returned from a Julio Iglesias concert at



John Gannon is interviewed by Channel 7 News in front of the shed in which he was trapped for 15 minutes during Saturday night's storm.

the South Shore Music Circus with her sister, whose car they had driven. They too noticed the power outage, as well as debris on the roads leading into Duxbury.

As they approached the cul-de-sac at the end of Parting Rock Road, Neville noticed two utility trucks. But before she could reach her driveway, Neville said, her husband Frank walked up to the car and told her, "Honey, you're not going to believe this, but a tree fell on your car."

The tree nearly fell on her husband's car as well, in fact,

though a branch which landed between the two prevented it.

Saturday's storm came on the heels of another severe electrical storm last Wednesday evening, which resulted in serious damage to at least one family's home.

The fire department fielded no fewer than 18 calls from residents reporting lightning strikes during that storm, which started just after 5 o'clock. "It was a very busy Wednesday afternoon," said Deputy Chief Wayne Sjostedt.

The most serious call came from a resident in Kingston, oddly enough, and required a bit of detective work from Duxbury firefighters.

At around 5:45, a resident of Rocky Nook notified the department that he could see a fire in the second story of a gray house in Duxbury, but could not ascertain exactly where the house was, Sjostedt said.

Following this tip, units were dispatched to the Bay Road area (according to Sjostedt, the only section of town visible from Rocky Nook) to sniff out the fire.

Duxbury firefighters roamed the neighborhood, until one spotted smoke emanating from a backyard on Seabury Point Road. No one was home, and firefighters had to force entry into the house to extinguish the blaze.

The damage, including significant heat and smoke damage, was "tremendous," Sjostedt said.

"We're just lucky that no one was home and no one was hurt," said the owner of the house, Rosemary Phalen. "The fire department was absolutely phenomenal," she added.